

May 8, 1970

In several quarters it has been suggested that, if we as a College act on the original resolution of the College Council and the Faculty and end the suspension of normal activities on Monday the 11th of May, we will be lessening the impact of the national movement. We are convinced that ending the suspension is in no way prejudicial to the movement, and that the question before us is one of institutional posture: are we to declare Middlebury in suspension for the rest of the year, while making exceptions for those students who wish to continue their scholarly activities in a normal way? or are we to declare that the College is resuming normal activities, while making exceptions for those students who wish to continue the work of the movement?

There are many of us on the Faculty who believe very strongly that the latter is the appropriate course for an institution like ours to take. The most compelling reasons seem to be these:

(1) We must ultimately come to a decision as to what our primary function as an institution is. We are not primarily a political institution, and to pretend that we are is to move out of our sphere of special competence and special influence. We are primarily an academic institution; the process of teaching and learning is what we are good at, and we would argue that to behave -- if only for a few weeks, -- as a political institution, divorced from the work which is our primary function, is to render us ineffective.

(2) We have to decide where our greatest impact will be, and what it will be. A continuation of the suspension is open to misinterpretations as to the reasons for our action by those outside the College. A decision to resume, while permitting those who feel they must continue the activities begun during the suspension the option to do so, will be a testimony to the community -- specifically to the town of Middlebury, now somewhat distrustful of and resentful of the College -- that we as an institution are continuing to operate in our proper way, continuing the open exchange of opinion and information on which we

(3) Finally, as a number of members both of the faculty and the student body have so eloquently pointed out in the last few days, the College stands for a tradition of learning, of free and impartial questioning, of rationality, which is becoming increasingly more precious and more vulnerable to destruction day by day. We must continue to operate in this way; if our leaders are not themselves open, if they are not themselves listening, questioning their ideas and those of others, it becomes all the more incumbent upon us to do so. What we conceive of as their irresponsibility must be met by our responsibility; ultimately, to maintain the suspension of normal operations beyond Monday is to admit a kind of failure in the process of rational interchange. This is a step which we feel the College should not permit itself to take.

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